

Pathological Mechanisms of Racial Cognition:

A Pre-Experimental Proposal for Conceptualizing and Treating
Racial Cognition Disorder (RCD)

Queen Marie-Soleil Seshat Landry

Principal Investigator

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Abstract

This pre-experimental proposal outlines a study to conceptualize and evaluate *Racial Cognition Disorder (RCD)*, framing persistent, maladaptive racist cognition as a functional mental-social pathology. Unlike traditional sociological models, this study investigates the cognitive rigidity, affective dysregulation, and delusional reinforcement loops inherent in extreme racial bias. The study aims to operationalize diagnostic criteria for RCD and evaluate the efficacy of a 12-week *Integrative Cognitive-Social Reconditioning (ICSR)* protocol. We hypothesize that treating racism as a pathological distortion of reality will yield measurable reductions in implicit bias and behavioral hostility compared to standard diversity training methods.

1 Introduction

Racism is traditionally analyzed through sociological, historical, and systemic lenses. However, persistent adherence to racial hierarchies—despite contradictory empirical evidence—shares functional similarities with cognitive pathologies, including delusional disorders and narcissistic personality traits.

1.1 Problem Statement

Current anti-racism interventions often fail because they address racism as a purely moral or educational deficit. They neglect the underlying neural and cognitive mechanisms that process racial "othering" as a survival mechanism, which, when maladaptive, functions as a pathology.

1.2 Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. **Operationalize RCD:** Define diagnostic criteria for Racial Cognition Disorder based on rigidity, distress, and impairment.
2. **Map Mechanisms:** Identify the cognitive distortions (e.g., confirmation bias, catastrophizing) and social reinforcement loops that sustain RCD.
3. **Test Intervention:** Evaluate the efficacy of the ICSR protocol in a pilot population.

2 Theoretical Framework: Defining RCD

We propose that severe racism operates as a distinct pathology characterized by the following provisional diagnostic criteria (modeled on DSM-5 standards):

- Criterion A** **Rigid Delusional Beliefs:** Persistent beliefs in inherent biological or moral hierarchies between races that are resistant to factual correction.
- Criterion B** **Affective Dysregulation:** Intense anxiety, rage, or disgust triggered by non-threatening interracial proximity or equity.

- Criterion C Cognitive Distortion:** Evidence of parasitic processing, where neutral stimuli are consistently misinterpreted to validate racial bias.
- Criterion D Functional Impairment:** The beliefs lead to social isolation, professional censure, or legal consequences.

3 Methodology

3.1 Study Design

A longitudinal, pre-experimental pilot study utilizing a single-group pre-test/post-test design with repeated measures.

3.2 Participants

- **Sample Size:** $N = 50$ adults.
- **Inclusion Criteria:** Individuals scoring in the top quartile of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and exhibiting high scores on the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale.
- **Exclusion Criteria:** Active psychosis or unmedicated Cluster A personality disorders (to differentiate RCD from generalized psychosis).

3.3 The Intervention: ICSR Protocol

Participants will undergo a 12-week *Integrative Cognitive-Social Reconditioning* program.

Table 1: The ICSR Intervention Modules

Phase	Module Description
Weeks 1-4	Cognitive Defusion: Identifying "automatic thoughts" regarding race. Techniques drawn from CBT to challenge catastrophic thinking and generalization.
Weeks 5-8	Exposure & Response Prevention (ERP): Graded exposure to diversity scenarios (VR and in-person) to decouple the "threat response" from the presence of racialized others.
Weeks 9-12	Social Re-Integration: Structured interaction with peer groups to build new reinforcement loops. Introduction of "Accountability Partners."

4 Data Collection and Analysis

4.1 Key Metrics

Data will be collected at three intervals: Baseline (T_0), Midpoint (T_1), and Post-Intervention (T_2).

1. **Implicit Cognition:** IAT D-scores (latency in milliseconds).
2. **Physiological Arousal:** Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) and Heart Rate Variability (HRV) during exposure to cross-racial stimuli.
3. **Behavioral inventory:** Self-reported and peer-reported frequency of discriminatory verbalizations.

4.2 Anticipated Statistical Outcomes

Table 2: Projected Changes in Biomarkers and Cognition

Metric	Range	Baseline (T_0)	Post (T_2)	Target Δ
IAT D-Score	-2 to +2	0.65 (Strong Bias)	0.15 (Neutral)	-76%
Cortisol Reactivity	$\mu\text{g/dL}$	High Reactivity	Normal	$p < .05$
RCD Symptom Scale	0-50	42	18	-57%
Empathy Index	0-100	20	65	+225%

4.3 Analysis Plan

Data will be analyzed using a **Repeated Measures ANOVA** to track changes over time within subjects. Post-hoc Bonferroni tests will determine significant differences between specific time points.

5 Ethical Considerations

5.1 Pathology vs. Responsibility

A critical ethical concern is whether labeling racism as a "disorder" absolves individuals of accountability. This study frames RCD similarly to substance use disorders or narcissism: *the pathology explains the etiology, but does not excuse the behavior*. The intervention emphasizes that recovery requires assuming total responsibility for one's cognition.

5.2 Participant Safety

To prevent psychological decompensation during "Exposure Therapy," licensed clinical psychologists will supervise all ERP sessions.

6 Discussion and Implications

If the hypotheses are supported, this study could shift the paradigm of anti-racism from a "persuasion" model to a "treatment" model.

- **Clinical Utility:** Creation of a standardized DSM-adjacent category allows for insurance-covered interventions for individuals at risk of radicalization.
- **Institutional Policy:** Workplaces could mandate "Cognitive Reconditioning" rather than generic sensitivity training for offenders.

References

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